

AMENDED CLAIM SET:

1. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound obtained by the reaction of a cellulose, which may contain a hemicellulose, with a reactant consisting essentially of acetic anhydride in the presence of a sulfuric acid catalyst and having at least one feature selected from the group consisting of:

(i) said cellulose triacetate compound has carboxyl groups wherein at least part of the carboxyl groups are free carboxyl groups;

(ii) said cellulose triacetate compound contains at least one member selected from the group consisting of an acid having an acid dissociation exponent pKa of 1.93 to 4.50 in water, an alkali metal salt of said acid, and an alkaline earth metal salt of said acid; and

(iii) said cellulose triacetate compound contains an alkali metal or an alkaline earth metal, wherein the total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose triacetate is 5.5×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent,

wherein said cellulose triacetate compound is soluble in an organic solvent.

2. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound according to Claim 1 having at least feature (iii), wherein the total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose triacetate is 2.5×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent.

3. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound according to Claim 2, wherein the total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth

metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is 1×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent.

4. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound according to Claim 1 having at least feature (ii), wherein the acid has a pKa value of 2.0 to 4.4.

5. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound according to Claim 1 having at least feature (ii), wherein the acid of feature (ii) is at least one organic acid selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic monocarboxylic acid, an aliphatic polycarboxylic acid, a hydroxycarboxylic acid, and an amino acid.

6. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound according to Claim 5, wherein the acid of feature (ii) is at least one organic acid selected from the group consisting of a saturated or unsaturated C₁₋₃ monocarboxylic acid, a saturated or unsaturated C₂₋₄ dicarboxylic acid, a C₁₋₆ hydroxycarboxylic acid, and an amino acid.

7. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound according to Claim 6, wherein the acid of feature (ii) is at least one member selected from the group consisting of formic acid, haloacetic acid, halopropionic acid, acrylic acid, malonic acid, succinic acid, glutaric acid, fumaric acid, glycolic acid, lactic acid, malic acid, tartaric acid, and citric acid.

8. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound according to Claim 1 having at least feature (ii), wherein the total content of the acid of feature (ii), the alkali metal salt of the acid, and the alkaline earth metal salt of the acid is 1×10^{-9} to 3×10^{-5} mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose triacetate.

9. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound according to Claim 8, wherein the total content of the acid of feature (ii), the alkali metal salt of the acid, and the alkaline earth metal salt of the acid is 1×10^{-8} to 2×10^{-5} mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose triacetate.

10. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound according to Claim 9, wherein the total content of the acid of feature (ii), the alkali metal salt of the acid, and the alkaline earth metal salt of the acid is 1×10^{-7} to 1×10^{-5} mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose triacetate.

11. (currently amended) A cellulose triacetate composition comprising the cellulose triacetate compound of Claim 1 in the form of a slurry, wherein the slurry has a pH of 4.5 to 6.0 5.5.

12. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate composition according to Claim 11, wherein the slurry has a pH of 4.8 to 6.0.

13. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound according to Claim 1, wherein the average degree of acetylation is from 58 to 62.5%.

14. (cancelled).

15. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound according to Claim 1, wherein the cellulose as a raw material is at least one member selected from the group consisting of a wood pulp and a linter pulp.

16. (previously presented) A cellulose triacetate compound according to Claim 15, wherein the cellulose as a raw material is at least one member selected from the group consisting of a hardwood pulp and a softwood pulp.

17. (currently amended) A method of producing a cellulose triacetate compound ~~claimed recited~~ in Claim 1, which comprises:

(i) mixing a cellulose triacetate, and an acid having an acid dissociation exponent pKa of 1.93 to 4.50 in water or the metal salt thereof, to ~~give~~ show a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0;

(ii) treating a cellulose triacetate with said acid or said metal salt thereof to ~~give~~ show a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0; or

(iii) adding an alkali metal salt of said acid or an alkaline earth metal salt of said acid to a cellulose triacetate, such that the total content of said alkali metal and said alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose triacetate is 5.5×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent, to ~~give~~ show a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0.

18. (currently amended) A dope containing the cellulose triacetate compound ~~according to recited in~~ Claim 1 and an organic solvent.

19. (cancelled).

20. (previously presented) A method for improving the releasability of a film from a support which comprises casting a dope of Claim 18 on the support.

21. (cancelled).

22. (currently amended) A method of producing a cellulose triacetate according to Claim 17, which comprises treating a cellulose with acetic acid, acetylating with a reactant consisting essentially of acetic anhydride in the presence of a sulfuric acid catalyst to produce a cellulose triacetate, and hydrolyzing or aging the cellulose triacetate using sulfuric acid as a catalyst, which further comprises:

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contd
- (i) mixing the cellulose triacetate, and an acid having an acid dissociation exponent pKa of 1.93 to 4.50 in water or the metal salt thereof, to show a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0;
 - (ii) treating the cellulose triacetate with said acid or said metal salt thereof to show a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0; or
 - (iii) adding an alkali metal salt of said acid or an alkaline earth metal salt of said acid to the cellulose triacetate, such that the total content of said alkali metal and said alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose triacetate is 5.5×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent, to show a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0.

23. (previously presented) A dope according to Claim 18, wherein said organic solvent comprises a halogenated hydrocarbon.

24. (new) A film comprising a cellulose triacetate compound obtained by the reaction of a cellulose, which may contain a hemicellulose, with a reactant consisting essentially of acetic anhydride in the presence of a sulfuric acid catalyst and having at least one feature selected from the group consisting of:

(i) said cellulose triacetate compound has carboxyl groups wherein at least part of the carboxyl groups are free carboxyl groups;

(ii) said cellulose triacetate compound contains at least one member selected from the group consisting of an acid having an acid dissociation exponent pKa of 1.93 to 4.50 in water, an alkali metal salt of said acid, and an alkaline earth metal salt of said acid; and

(iii) said cellulose triacetate compound contains an alkali metal or an alkaline earth metal, wherein the total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose triacetate is 5.5×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent,

wherein said cellulose triacetate compound is soluble in an organic solvent.

25. (new) A film according to claim 24, which is an optical film having a transparency of 60 to 100%, a haze of 1 to 8, or a yellowness index of 1 to 7.